

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00236 111710Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 EB-07 SSO-00 HEW-04 L-03
/037 W

-----111712Z 007088 /44

O P 111635Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO USDA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5453
INFO USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY RAAT PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BEXP, EGR, TS
SUBJ: IMPORT OF SEED POTATOES INTO TUNISIA: REQUEST FOR
NAMES OF COUNTRIES IMPORTING POTATO SEEDS FROM US

REF: 76 TUNIS 8858, 76 TUNIS 8865

1. SUMMARY: US SEED POTATOES HELD UP IN PORT OF TUNIS
ON "SANITARY GROUNDS" WHICH NOT SATISFACTORILY EXPLAINED. WE
INTEND OFFICIAL DEMARCHE IF PROBLEM NOT SOON RESOLVED. REQUEST
DATA ON OTHER IMPORTERS OF US SEED TO HELP IMPORTER MAKE CASE
WITH GOT. END SUMMARY.

2. SUBJECT SHIPMENT OF 1,000 MT OF KENNEBEC SEED POTATOES
(FROM RED RIVER VALLEY IN MINNESOTA AND NORTH DAKOTA), IMPORTED
BY SICOPRIM, ARRIVED TUNIS DECEMBER 31. ROLAND P. JAHIEL OF
FRUITEX CORP, LOS ANGELES (TELEPHONE 213-670-4924), THE
SUPPLYING COMPANY, ACCOMPANIED BY MR. FAURE OF OUTRE-MER
IMPORT-EXPORT OF MARSEILLES, THROUGH WHICH SALE TO TUNISIA
WAS MADE, ARRIVED JANUARY 1 TO HELP CLEAR SHIPMENT. JAHIEL
BROUGHT NEW USDA PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATE WHICH HE TOLD US
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COVERS ALL DISEASES LISTED IN DECEMBER 15 GOT NOTICE. (SEE
EMBASSY REFTELS. WE REQUESTED BUT NEITHER JAHIEL NOR IMPORTER
ABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH COPY OF CERTIFICATE). IN ADDITION,
SEEDS WERE ANALYZED IN TUNIS BY AGRICULTURAL MINISTRY BUT
RESULTS - WHICH JAHIEL TOLD US GAVE CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH -
HAVE NOT OFFICIALLY BEEN COMMUNICATED TO IMPORTER. SHIPMENT
STILL SITTING IN PORT OF LA GOULETTE, UNDER CANVAS, AT DAILY

COST OF \$350 AND CONSIDERABLE RISK TO IMPORTER,WHO ALREADY HAS PAID FRUITEX ITS \$400,000. IT NOW APPEARS TOO LATE FOR SICOPRIM TO TAKE DELIVERY OF ADDITIONAL 1,000 TONS ON ORDER FOR THIS SEASON EVEN IF SANITARY CLEARANCE GRANTED.

3. LATE LAST WEEK, TUNISIAN MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE,NOW IN KHARTOUM UNTIL WEEKEND, ALLEGEDLY EXPRESSED SOME RESERVATIONS AND HAS NOT SIGNED PERMISSION FOR US SEEDS TO ENTER TUNISIAN MARKET - ON GROUNDS, IT WAS SAID, THAT US SEED POTATOES PRESENT SANITARY RISK AND THUS ARE NOT IMPORTED BY FRANCE OR OTHER COUNTRIES.

4. WHEN WE SPOKE WITH JAHIEL EARLY LAST WEEK HE HAD PROMISED TO INFORM US IF SANITARY CLEARANCE PROBLEM NOT RESOLVED. HE THEN WAS OPTIMISTIC NOT ONLY THAT IMMEDIATE PROBLEM WOULD BE RESOLVED BUT THAT REGULAR EXPORT BUSINESS TO TUNISIA COULD BE ESTABLISHED. HOWEVER, ON JANUARY 10 WE RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM JAHIEL (IN MADRID ON WAY TO PARIS AND RETURN LATE THIS WEEK TO LOS ANGELES) AND VISIT FROM MR. R. CHAHED OF SICOPRIM INFORMING US THAT PROBLEM CONTINUES.

UTK CHAHED ASKED US FOR DATA TO REFUTE CLAIM THAT AMERICAN SEED POTATOES NOT ACCEPTABLE IMPORTS ELSEWHERE. HE ALSO SAID FARMERS' UNION (UNA) PRESIDENT GHEFIRA HAD UNDERTAKEN TO WRITE LETTER TO MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ON MATTER BUT CLEARANCE STILL PROBLEMATIC. HOWEVER CHAHED CALLED EMBASSY TODAY (JANUARY 11) TO SAY HE IS TOLD CLEARANCE MAY BE GIVEN JANUARY 14 AND REQUESTING WE NOT INTERVENE UNTIL OUTCOME EVIDENT. OBVIOUSLY CHAHED STILL DISTURBED BUT ANXIOUS NOT TO PREJUDICE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIS POSITION WITH MINISTRY.

6. IF SHIPMENT NOT CLEARED BY JANUARY 17, AND IMPORTER AGREES, WE INTEND TO ASK HIGH MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FOR CLARIFICATION. IF THIS NOT SATISFACOTORY, WE WOULD PROPOSE TO RAISE ISSUE AT APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVLE IN CONTEXT OF CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS UNDER JOINT COMMISSION ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT.

7. ACTION: MEANWHILE, WE WOULD APPRECIATE USDA SUPPLYING SOONEST, IN FORM SUITABLE TO PASS TO GOT, LIST OF COUNTRIES TO WHICH US (AND PERHAPS CANADA) HAS EXPORTED OR IS EXPORTING SEED POTATOES. WE UNDERSTAND FROM JAHIEL THAT SCOLL CAMPBELL OF USDA HYATTSVILLE MAY HAVE THIS INFORMATION.
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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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